17.3.11(4)

A

LETTER

CONCERNING THE

REGIUM DONUM,

ADDRESSED TO THOSE

MINISTERS,

TO WHOM HIS MAJESTY'S BOUNTY HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED SINCE THE DEATH OF DR. STENNETT.

By JOHN MARTIN.

LONDON:

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FOR T. PALMER, BOOKSELLER, SWALLOW STREET, OXFORD-ROAD.

1806.

TO THE

MINISTERS.

BRETHREN,

HAVING been your willing agent in distributing to you His Majesty's Royal Bounty for almost ten years, and being released from that honorable and laborious service, I will now give you my sentiments of that useful benefaction, remind you of several changes in the distribution of it, and mention some of the oppositions to which I have been exposed, while it was entrusted to my disposal.

My sentiments of this useful benefaction are permanent. I have long thought, and still think, His Majesty has an undoubted

right to grant the distribution of this bounty to whom he will, and that he may increase, diminish, or withdraw it, whenever it seems to him expedient.

Some are not of this opinion: they consider it rather as a debt due "for active "and important services," than as a free gift; but this notion I cannot approve. That Dissenters have at any time rendered more important services to the state, than it was their duty to perform, or have exceeded in loyalty and zeal their fellow subjects, Churchmen will not admit: we should therefore remember, that contested claims are not quickly granted, and that sometimes they are strongly resented. As we have thought it right to dissent from the Church of England, let us endeavour to convince them who continue in it, that we have acted conscientiously, and not from any vain or venal motive. Such is the sum of my sentiments on this subject.

I will next remind you of several changes which have taken place in the distribution

of this part of His Majesty's Bounty, that none of you may be too much surprised at my being dismissed from that employment.

From authentic papers long since put into my hands, I could say much of the management and mismanagement of this charity, which as it is well or ill conducted, is, I believe, of no little consequence to the peace or disturbance of many in this country.—But at present much must not be expected.

From papers now before me it appears, that the first receivers of His Majesty's Bounty knew not to whom they were indebted. The varied forms of the receipts they were to sign, from 1722 to 1726, were strangely obscure; and the form in use in the year 1762 was equally mysterious: but for such obscurity, the managers might have better reasons than I have been able to discover.

In the year 1762, they erected themselves into a society, consisting of six mi-

nisters and seven gentlemen, and agreed, " that no person shall be deemed a mi- " nister of the three denominations, or " have any share of this charity, who does " not apply himself wholly to the work of " the ministry; that is, that follows a trade."

It was also agreed, " that the chairman " of this society be interchangeably a gen- " tleman and a minister;" and in the same paper, I find these words; " October " 16, 1764, Memorandum; Dined together " at the King's-Head Tavern, and audited " part of the accounts." Their dining together does not so much displease me, as the preceding resolution; which they had no authority to make, and which if re-made, will deprive of relief far more than half the proper objects of this charity.

As this voluntary society did not please many who were, perhaps, perversely discontented, it is certain they could not always agree among themselves. Of this infelicity, during the management of Dr.

Chandler, I could give you ample proof from the notes of a learned gentleman, who had the honor and the trouble of being in those days one of the trustees. But as you cannot wonder that such a mixed society should now and then jar, when they were talking of pounds, shillings, and pence, I apprehend you do not wish me to mention their particular disputes.

When Dr. Stennett received his first warrant from the Treasury, or by whose interest he obtained it, I cannot tell; nor do I know what previous promises he made to any of his brethren, of their acting with him if he succeeded: but I well remember, more than ten years ago, defending his office and character with due respect to both, in opposition to a gentleman of some consequence, who had rudely, much to say of him and of His Majesty's Bounty.

After Dr. Stennett's decease, I wished to be his successor to ministers of my own denomination. To obtain that honor, I ap-

plied to Mr. Pitt, who was then First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The learned gentlemen, by whom I applied to him for that favor, were well known to Mr. Pitt, and were gentlemen who had approved of my political sentiments on a trying occasion. I now refer to my intended speech on the Test Act, in the year 1789. Had I been permitted to deliver the substance of that speech at the Library, probably it would not have been printed; and if it had not been printed, perhaps no part of the *Regium Donum* would have been committed to my trust.

Dr. Stennett died August 24, 1795, and by attempting to be his successor; I was surrounded with oppositions; some of which I promised to mention.

The arguments of the gentlemen who opposed me were so specious and earnest, that I did not receive my first warrant till February, 1797.

Before it was in my possession, I was desired to write a letter of thanks to Mr. Pitt, and to inform him in what manner I intended to dispose of the money. I did so, and had the pleasure to hear from the Archbishop of Canterbury, that Mr. Pitt spoke of this letter in terms of approbation.

At this period, I was permitted to make choice of Mr. Urwick of Clapham, and Mr. Barber of London, to act with me in the distribution of this money, if they were so disposed. When, therefore, I had received at the Exchequer for the nominal sum of eight hundred and fifty pounds, the net sum of seven hundred and eighty-four pounds fourteen shillings, I waited on those gentlemen, and, in a respectful manner, offered EACH of them two hundred pounds of that sum. Two hundred pounds of it I kept for my own distribution, and proposed to deposit the remaining fraction of one hundred and eighty-four pounds fourteen shillings at Child's

and Co. Temple Bar, to be applied to extraordinary cases, just as they might occur, either among the Presbyterians, Independents, or Baptists.

This equitable offer met with Mr. Urwick's approbation. He ingenuously confessed, that Presbyterian ministers were now fewer in number, and better provided for, than many ministers of my own denomination; but after consulting with the former trustees, he and Mr. Barber informed me, they could not with propriety accede to my proposal. Their letter was dated February 21, 1797.

In February, 1798, a paper, with this title, was sent to Lambeth: GENERAL REMARKS RELATIVE TO THE ROYAL BOUNTY, GRANTED TO THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING CLERGY. In that paper, if it yet exists, are these words: "If "Mr. Martin be continued, the former "trustees, how much soever they may wish

" to relieve the cases that lie before them,
" must decline acting with him, and acqui-
" esce in surrendering a trust which they
" and their predecessors have held, under
" the favor of His present Majesty, and
" that of his Royal Grandfather, with very
" little interruption, for more than seventy
" years."

As these worthy trustees could not approve of His Majesty's interference with their imaginary rights, it is no wonder they could not bear the least interposition from one of his ministers. This is evident, for they say, that " about the year 1776, " a trustee was named by Lord North; " but when he was told that the inter- " ference was unusual, he gave up the " gentleman, and apologized to the trustees " for interfering." Perhaps His Majesty had not heard of his Lordship's condescension.

In the same paper we are told, that " the " Baptists were accustomed to have but two " shares, the Independents three shares,

" and the Presbyterians four shares. In " other words, the trust will consist, when " complete, of four Presbyterians, three " Independents, and two Baptists."

Here you find a considerable alteration from the year 1762: then there were thirteen trustees, now but nine; then there were six ministers and seven gentlemen, now it seems that nine ministers will complete the trust. What the Archbishop thought of the whole of this business, and of those who engaged in it, I could tell you; but it is sufficient to say, he was not deceived.

The trustees were now to acquiesce in surrendering their trust; but this was not an easy task, and their acquiescence, if it ever existed, was of short duration.

In March, 1799, a new mode of opposition was adopted. The Archbishop was then informed, I had given too large a share of His Majesty's Bounty to the Baptists.

On my firm and unequivocal reply to this illiberal report, his Grace told me, my answer "was perfectly satisfactory, as it re- "pelled, with great propriety, an unjust "charge."

Still dissatisfied, in January, 1803, my opponents sent a memorial to the Treasury, in which they must be conscious they had written what they could not prove; yet the memorial thus concludes: "We pray that your "Lordships will take these premises into "your consideration, and that His Ma- "jesty will condescend to repose the same "confidence in US, which WE and our pre- "decessors have LONG experienced."

It is generally believed, that two of the ministers who signed this memorial had never been considered as trustees, and that the predecessor of one of them had not been publicly so employed. What then could induce these two ministers to sign this strange memorial?—Who they were, most of you will easily understand.

It was on this occasion that I paid my last visit at Lambeth, where I was always received by the Archbishop with that kind of urbanity which I shall long remember; and am thankful, that in our last interview it was neither diminished nor concealed.

In April, 1803, two of the former trustees adopted a milder mode of proceeding. They sent me word by a respectable friend, they were now willing to act with me, provided I would give each of them a third part of His Majesty's Bounty to distribute among the Independents and Presbyterians. The friend who brought me these unexpected tidings, assured me that these two ministers wished to know when I could conveniently meet them in the city; adding, he had no doubt of my being cordially and politely received.

As this arrangement coincided with my original intention, I told my friend, that if they were appointed to act with me by go-

vernment, and did not claim their thirds as hereditary trustees, I would comply with their request.

How this answer was delivered or received, I know not; but have reason to believe that former oppositions were renewed, and continued to August, 1806. I was then informed by proper authority, that Dr. Abraham Rees was appointed to be my successor.

Having given you as concisely as I could, my sentiments of the Regium Donum, having reminded you of former changes, and of some of the oppositions to which I have been exposed, I hope, reports in circulation will be refuted, and that groundless suspicions will be suppressed.

I am, Brethren,

Your's in our Lord,

JOHN MARTIN.

London,
September 23d, 1806.

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Mr. MARTIN.

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CHRISTIAN PREFERENCE

A

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY

The Death of Mrs. Elizabeth Rootsey;

From Philippians i. 23.

WITH THE

ADDRESS AT THE VAULT.

By George Pritchard.

WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD. 2 *Cor. v.* 8.

COLCHESTER:

PRINTED BY I. MARSDEN.

Price Six-pence.

1806.